

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4638

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

USAREUR

CDR 4TH TRANS BDE OBERURSEL GER

CDR USATTGE RDAM NE//AEUIR-TM//

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MMOL, MARR, BE, US

SUBJECT: RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS
SHIPMENTS

REF: CDR USATTGE RDAM NE MSG 011040Z AUG 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: BELGIAN PORT AUTHORITIES AT ZEEBRUGGE HAVE PROPOSED
CHANGES IN REGULATIONS (TO GO INTO EFFECT NOVEMBER 25) WHICH
WOULD SEVERELY RESTRICT USE OF THAT PORT FOR U.S. MUNITIONS
SHIPMENTS IF CARRIED OUT. WE ARE ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM AT
BOTH THE TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL LEVELS AND WILL REPORT
DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

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1. ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, ZEEBRUGGE PORT AUTHORITIES HAVE PROPOSED FOLLOWING LIMITATIONS FOR MUNITIONS ENTERING THAT PORT SCHEDULED TO GO INTO EFFECT NOVEMBER 25, 1975:

- (A) 250 METRIC TONS OF CATEGORY "A";
- (B) 1000 METRIC TONS OF CATEGORY "B";
- (C) 500 METRIC TONS WHEN MIXED CATEGORIES ARE ON BOARD;
- (D) A MAXIMUM OF TWO MUNITIONS SHIPS WOULD BE PERMITTED IN THE PORT AT ONE TIME.

2. UP TO THE PRESENT, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS ON THE QUANTITIES OF MUNITIONS THAT A SHIP COULD BRING INTO THE PORT OF ZEEBRUGGE AS LONG AS THE REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WERE OBSERVED. ZEEBRUGGE HAS BEEN EMPLOYED AS A US AND NATO MILITARY MUNITIONS PORT SINCE THE EARLY 1960S. IN RECENT YEARS (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EARLY 1973) ALL US MUNITIONS AND EXPLOSIVES IMPORTED TO OR EXPORTED FROM EUROPE HAVE PASSED THROUGH ZEEBRUGGE. THE ANNUAL TONNAGE HAS BEEN APPROXIMATELY 50,000 LONG TONS. THE AVERAGE LOAD FOR US AMMO SHIPS ENTERING ZEEBRUGGE IS APPROXIMATELY 5,000 METRIC TONS OF MIXED CATEGORIES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE PORT IN NORTHERN EUROPE IS NORDENHAM, WEST GERMANY, BUT THAT THIS PORT IS A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR ZEEBRUGGE AS IT IS SMALL AND VERY CROWDED.

3. PROPOSED NEW REGULATIONS FOR USE OF ZEEBRUGGE ARE, WE UNDERSTAND, THE RESULT OF COMPLICATED LOCAL AND BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS AS WELL AS PERSONALITY CONFLICTS WITHIN PORT AUTHORITY. WE PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE ON AN URGENT BASIS AT BOTH THE LOCAL AND POLITICAL LEVELS. THE NAVAL ATTACHE WILL IN THE FIRST INSTANCE PURSUE HIS CONTACTS AT THE PORT AUTHORITY AND ATTEMPT TO GET PROPOSED REGULATIONS FULLY AND SPEEDILY RESCINDED. UNLESS THAT APPROACH SHOWS IMMEDIATE GOOD PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS, WE INTEND TO MAKE DEMARCHE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY, PRESENTING ISSUE AND BACKGROUND AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, REQUESTING BELGIAN GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AND STRESSING NEED FOR URGENCY DUE TO LEAD TIME IN ESTABLISHING SHIPPING SCHEDULES.
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